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SUBJECT: JAPAN: MINISTER FUKUSHIMA DISCUSSES HAGUE
CONVENTION, OKINAWA, AND ECONOMIC AFFAIRS WITH AMBASSADOR

REF: TOKYO 2410

¶1. (SBU) SUMMARY: State Minister for Consumer Affairs, Food Safety, Declining Birthrate, and Gender Equality Mizuho Fukushima discussed the Hague Convention and Okinawa in addition to her various portfolios during a courtesy call by Ambassador Roos on October 19. Fukushima explained that her basic aim as a member of a coalition government is to find ways to reflect the views of the Social Democratic Party of Japan in the policies of the Hatoyama government. END SUMMARY

¶2. (SBU) Hague Convention: Fukushima opened the meeting by conveying a word of thanks from the Japanese Lawyers Federation for the Obama administration's cooperation with non-governmental organizations on the prevention of torture. Reflecting on recent media coverage of cases of international child abduction in light of her own experience as a lawyer, Fukushima also noted that she believes Japan should consider whether to sign the Hague Convention, from the point of view of what is best for the child. Acknowledging MOFA's jurisdiction, she emphasized that an increase in international marriages has made the visitation rights for children of divorced parents a pressing issue, in part because access to visitation is not traditionally granted to the parent without custody.

¶3. (SBU) Okinawa: Fukushima praised Ambassador Roos for visiting Hiroshima with his family and urged that he visit Okinawa, particularly Henkoko, at an early date. Highlighting the issue of environmental protection, she pressed the Ambassador to reconsider Futenma relocation. (Note: The October 20 morning NHK television news reported that Minister Fukushima exchanged opinions about Okinawa with the Ambassador. End note.)

¶4. (SBU) Declining Birthrate Countermeasures: Fukushima reiterated the Hatoyama government's commitment to provide a child allowance and free high school as countermeasures to the problem of Japan's low birthrate. Additionally, she expressed the hope that the government will be able to boost budgetary support for child care facilities to increase availability of after-school care for elementary school children (especially grades 1-3). She described such policies as steps toward implementation of a Human New Deal that emphasizes investing in people.

¶5. (SBU) Consumer Affairs and Food Safety: Fukushima said that her aim as minister is to show results during the newly launched Consumer Affairs Agency's first year. She also welcomed any assistance the United States may be able to

provide with respect to administration of such an agency. Referring to a recent incident where spinal material was found in U.S. beef, she reiterated the request of Minister of Agriculture, Forestry and Fisheries (MAFF) Akamatsu for an inquiry into the matter reported in reftel. In response, the Ambassador reaffirmed the safety of U.S. beef and underscored how the existence of many different standards gives rise to this problem; a universal high standard would solve it.

16. (SBU) Personal Note: At one point in the conversation, Fukushima mentioned that her grandmother and grandfather emigrated to Hawaii 90 years ago, and that her father and his siblings were born in Hawaii. She added that her grandfather, s younger brother and wife were sent to an internment camp during the Second World War.
ROOS